I:Gabb N-5 (1873-1874) 1876
SA19 Talamanca SA19

764 The final disposal of the remains is a matter of great care. The whole of the tribe goes to the district of Bri-bri for this purpose. The receptacle is a square pit, about four feet deep and ten feet square. This is paved on the bottom with stones, and is roofed over from the weather, by a series of heavy hewn slabs of a very durable wood, open on the front and ends, and sloping to the ground at the back. Each family possesses one of these pits and here, after the funeral feast, the bundle of bones is carried and deposited. After the rest, the remains of Santiago were carried to the "royal" pit and deposited without further ceremony.

The Cabecars, according to Mr. Lyon, have about the same ceremony, but their pits are mere holes, not paved, and covered by planks laid on the ground level.

The Tiribis have a death feast, but it differs in some respects from the others. The body is buried immediately after death, but no longer with the property of the deceased, and, of course, the defunct is not present at his final feast, as with the Bri-bris.

766 Mr. Lyon, to whom I owe much of the information in the present memoir, has described to me one circumstance, in connection with these death feasts, that I have not witnessed. The warriors among the Bribris, who fought in the war with the Tiribis were honored with a little different ceremonial. They are now all gone, and the ceremony is extinct. At the death feast, a person entered, clad in a long gown, wig, and mask. The gown and wig were made of mastate, or bark cloth, covered with "old man's beard" moss, sewed all over it, making a shaggy and nearly shapeless mass. The mask was made of half a "tree calabash," properly fixed up with a wax nose, &c. A copy of this entire dress was made for me by an old Indian, and is now in the Smithsonian museum. The person thus accoutred, took part in the dance, made free with the women and scared the children without let or hindrance. Mothers with young children took them to him and placed them for a moment on his shoulder, "to prevent the evil spirit from doing them harm." Neither Lyon nor the Indians could give me a very clear account of what spirit, whether good or evil, this represented. But the people seemed to regard him as rather of the malevolent sort; to be classed under the general head of "*Bi*" or Devil. Doubtless this, at one time had a distinct meaning, now lost. [532]

771 No strictly religious belief can be said to exist among these Indians, in the sense that it is usually understood among us. They have, however, a series of ideas or beliefs which affect their daily lives and are never lost sight of. In connection with the funeral feast, described above, I have referred to their idea of a future state.

775 During the year that the body lies in the woods, the disembodied spirit prowls around, living on wild fruits, of which the wild cacao is the only one of which I know the name, although others were also pointed out to me. At the end of that time, when the funeral fire is kindled, the spirit is thus attracted to the feast, whence it departs on its final journey.

623 [625] pendent to a certain extent upon what remains of the former all-powerful council. The council is composed of the four or six oldest men, and they approve or disapprove of the police appointment. If they disapprove, a new agent has to be named. Formerly this group selected the *cabildo*, but this has disappeared today. The chief duty of the council is to 624 select the first and second mayordomos of the church, and the two women who are to cook for the church. These personages function during *fiestas* or the visits of the priest, and are appointed yearly. If there is a change in the personnel, the former mayordomo has to hand over all the religious symbols and whatever money there may be to the new one.

437 426 **Exchange and Distribution of Goods.** The *Boruca* amongst themselves are in the habit of exchanging foodstuffs. If a family lacks a certain commodity, for example corn, a transaction can be made with another party on the strength of a promise to return the item at the next harvest. The personal word of one Indian to another is very respected.

438 175 Salt (see pp. 8–9) was formerly an item of trade with the neighboring *Térraba*, *Cabécares*, and *Bribri*, who inhabit the areas farther inland, as well as with more distant *Talamancan* peoples. Reports of Boruca trade with salt as the chief article of commerce exist from as early as 1697. In that year, two priests, Francisco de San Joseph and Pablo de Rebullida, from the *Talamancan* missions, wrote:

> . . . . these (Indians) bargain with the Borucan and Texabas (Térrabas), they give them cotton "mantas" (skirts) painted which serve as covers on tables and curtains, and the Borucas give them salt, axes, machetes, dogs, and other things."

[continued top of page 24-B]

RELIGION, MAGIC, ETC.

● 771 The *Boruca* are professed Roman Catholics. The priest visits the community about twice yearly, and baptizes, marries, and confirms all at once. Very little vestige of old beliefs remains, and those that do, are generally well disguised with a covering of Catholicism.

796 On the day of St. John the Baptist, the *Boruca* go at midnight to the creek which runs through the town and bathe. December

[continued bottom of page 24-B]

" See Informe, 1697.

796 the Immaculate Conception is carried, in the procession, by four women picked by the priest. A food bazaar is held in the church yard, and the only ancient vestige that can be seen is the dance of the *negritos* (see p. 29), who generally precede the procession, but sometimes appear later in the day. This variation depends upon the priest. Frequently, the priest feels that the dance is too pagan and should not be performed in the solemn march.

[798]

● 771 **Superstitions and Beliefs.** There are certain superstitions and beliefs peculiar to the *Boruca* which may be associated with their former credence. When planting, the Indians 241 water the newly sown seeds with water mixed with soil from the cemetery. This is supposed to keep the rats and other rodents from eating the seeds. All the Indians are afraid of thunder, 821 believing that it is closely allied with bad luck. When it thunders in the hills on the east side of the Diquis or Térraba River, the *Boruca* say that a large snake is moving his tail. This snake used to live near El Sapo, in these hills, but when Monseñor Thiel, the former Archbishop of Costa Rica, passed through this region on one of his missionary trips, the snake moved, from fear of the Archbishop, to the headwaters of the Balsar River, west of the Diquis River. Here he is today, in a very steep and isolated spot where no one can find him.

When it thunders toward the south, they claim that the two pejibaye palms which grow on the summit of the Hill of the Sorcerer are angry. The wind that blows at night is a soul 825 in pain. It is interesting that the Indians still 773 tell, and actually believe, that without the help of the *sukia*[28a] there would not now be game around Boruca, and so, of course, all the people would have died. They say that eighteen years ago there was no game in the vicinity. A *sukia* from Talamanca was summoned. He went to a high mountain which lies south of the present village of Boruca. This mountain is called "El Cerro del Encanto," or "Hill of the Sorcerer." A great noise was heard. When he returned, there were many wild peccary in the neighborhood. They still recount and believe that "Tatica Cuazarn," the mythical sorcerer who lives on the Hill of the Sorcerer, used to visit Boruca

[28a] See below.

[p. 25-A]

6:Rome I-8 (1956-1968)1962
SA19 Talamanca SA19
[P.51(1)] Cabécar Bribri

The "histories" or legends of the Cabécares and Bribri are numerous. By reviewing them we can gather some of their fundamental theology in spite of the influence of Christian missionaries and contacts with non-indigenous cultures. The Indians themselves refer to these stories as histories and do not like the word tale or legend. To them, they are still something sacred and apart and on the whole are known only to the *jawá* or older men. They are recounted to aspirants, and occasionally around the fire during nights of interminable winter rain. It is interesting that histories dealing with subjects such as the soul, the creation of the world, etc., are usually Cabécar by origin although accepted by the Bribri. Secular tales recounting the reason for the appearance or the voice of certain animals are generally Bribri.

Theological Beliefs. At the root of Talamanca religion, there is one powerful god, *sibu*, who, as Lehmann notes, has at least twenty different names.[160] He is good and is responsible for the good in the world. He is everywhere. When he is with non-Indians he dresses with shoes, etc., but with Indians he does as they do. He speaks all languages and taught people how to do everything.

The role of *sibu* is akin to that of an artist or architect. He thought of man and he made us through *suLá* while he, *sibu*, was thinking of them. The good and bad people all go to *sibu* when they die if their bones have been sung to (*see* Bone Burial). The soul must wait for this, and if they are never sung to, then a snake eats the bones. The souls of Indians and non-Christians go to the world below, nevertheless. This is why *sibu* took everything from beneath the earth to make place for the Indians there. In this underground domain, there are four worlds. One is for sickness; one for the owners (*dueño*) or protectors of animals; one for Indians; one for the evil spirits. Disease is often sent by the spirit owners or protectors of animals or the animals themselves. This is one reason why the medicine man has his own and secret name for them.

The Talamanca religion on the whole, how-

[160] Lehmann, 1920, vol. 1, p. 220.

MYTHS

771 ever, is animistic. Their world is governed by
776 spirits, in spite of the goodness of *sibu*. Many of these are evil; some are bad; and a few are malevolent. At one time or other, most have had connections with *sibu*.

773 According to the Bribri, *sibu*, the great god,
776 had a son, *suLá*, by *sibu amí* (literally, god mother). *suLá* was responsible for teaching the cultivation of plantains and maize and the making of chicha. He also taught the people how to build circular houses (*palenques*). He is credited with placing the Bribri in Talamanca and the Changuinas, Térrabas (Terribís) and Brunkas (Borucas) in their respective locations. Among the Bribri, he is responsible for
[614] the *sniwak* clan whose name signifies clan, "seed or race," of the vessel (pot). The name came about because *suLá* ordered this group to
[775] go after death underneath a pot (*un*), turned upside down, and thus reach their heaven which is underground.

776 Certain evil spirits are common to the Cabécar and Bribri and dominate their lives. The most important is known in both tongues as *bé* or *ŋą* and in Spanish as the devil. He is able to kill as well as be a maldoer. People believe that he is omnipotent, living in all parts at all times. Another very powerful devil is *bukLá* (*see* Tabus) who seems to be many devils but can be taken as one. People have been carried away and eaten by him. He and the *tǫmí* are guardians of animals. *Lą̀n* or *kiritum* is also a bad devil (*see* Theological Myths: *A Tale of the bukLá*).[2] He can take any form, including the human form, and can be more than one. He makes his home in the air. *kiritum* differs from another "devil" of the Bribri, *kritəbó*, who takes the shape of a dog and walks at night. Another minor group of evil spirits are the *kambra* (*see* Legends: Bribri version of The Sea).[3]

One of the most feared evil spirits is usually called *dinamą́* in Cabécar and *dikuŋ* in Bribri, although he is known by other names such as *bék-namą́* in Cabécar and *tsirule* in Bribri.[161] He is the same as a bad water spirit named *dikuŋ*, in Bribri, who lives in the sea, enters rivers, and drinks human blood.

Formerly, there was another very evil spirit, *miguchké*. He killed the wife of Thunder and

[2] [see category 116, §64. Analyst.]
[3] [see category 116, §56. Analyst.]